

SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 1870.

Subject: Conflicts of the Christian Life.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



NEW-YORK:

J. B. FORD & CO., NO. 39 PARK ROW.

1870.

AUTHORIZATION.

Brooklyn, January, 1869.

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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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CONFLICTS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”—1 PET. I. 6, 7.

It is here recognized that though a Christian has manifold joys and exhilarations in his career, he is subject to occasional “heaviness,” or heart-sadness, “through manifold temptations.” But it is recognized that such experiences belong to the very idea of piety, which is a process by which the spiritual in man gains a complete ascendancy over the physical. And as the gold that is in the rock is subjected, first to severe blows, by which it is comminuted, and then to the action of various agents, and to the flame, in order that it may be extracted from its gross accompaniments, and become pure; so there is in man true spiritual gold, a spiritual element, a spiritual nature, that is to be separated from the lower and grosser elements of his being. And there is, in the providence of God, and in the scheme of grace, an economy by which this work is accomplished. It is clearly taught that there is throughout the Christian life, the element of conflict, the element of trial,—the elements of temptation and suffering; and that these are not accidental; that they are not simply incidental to certain circumstances; that they inhere in the innermost nature of the work that is to be done; that they so much belong to it, that they who have none of these conflicts have no right to suppose that they are Christians. They are not sons unless God deals with them as he deals with all whom he is purifying and preparing for glory.

This experience may be gradual, diffusive, resulting at length in certain growths and ripenings and attainments. Or, it may be critical, peremptory. Usually it is both. We are carried through a series of trainings which are at work upon us all the time—minute influences; a thousand attritions of care; a thousand little events of sorrow; a thousand disappointments, each of which in itself is trifling, but the aggregate of which is most important in its result upon our normal de-

velopment—evolving, unfolding, and confirming the inherent strength of character.

But then, besides the strong natures, there are natures that are disproportionately formed and unbalanced, natures that in their early experience were brought up unfortunately, that go through more critical experiences still. Every single element in them, first or last, has to undergo a severe trial to see whether it shall be subdued, and lose the rankness and coarseness and harshness of its natural flavor, and become perfectly sweetened by the Christ-element that is to be in every one.

This element of conflict is therefore universal, in that it belongs to all. It is universal, also, in that it belongs to every part of our nature—though it is not the same in degree at all times, nor to all persons.

Such spiritual conflicts exist, I have said, in a general and continuous way; but, as in our text, it is recognized that there are special trials, and special times of trial. There are periods when out of joy men come into great "heaviness" and sadness. The whole color of a man's life is frequently determined by some special trial or conflict which he goes through, for days, and for weeks, and for months, and sometimes even for years. And the critical passages of a man's history are not the outward happenings, but the inward, invisible, unjournalized, unspoken, and almost unknown experiences through which the heart passes.

When men are called into the Christian life, they do not come in as experts and veterans. They come in as recruits, to be drilled. And all their campaign lies before them. The victory of our faith is gained step by step; and the great personal epochs in our history are those in which the good principle, after severe conflict, gains ascendancy over the evil that is in us.

In order that we may look the more fully into this general truth, I will specialize, and show, not by any means all the conflicts through which men go, but some of the special ones.

1. Men often pass through scenes which thoroughly awaken them to the higher spiritual life. For many persons glide into a religious life, I had almost said, unconsciously. I do not mean that there is not a point of time when men choose, and determine; but the choice is so feeble in some natures, and the gradations are so small, that while they are consciously religious—that is, purposed to live according to the rules of Christ—yet their life is not fairly stirred up. They are like men who, being awaked in the morning before they have finished their sleep, though they are awake and dressed, and though they move about, move as sleep-walkers. And frequently it is the case that there happen to such persons experiences in any of a hundred ways—to some experiences of joy, and to others experiences of sorrow; to some crushing

afflictions, and to others stimulating afflictions ; or, not afflictions, but strifes; vehement pressures on the one side and on the other; the introduction of elements that wake up a depressed life in the soul, and bring men out finally into a higher, clearer, stronger light—so that though they could not say that they were not Christians before, they are conscious that they have now come to a level and to a height of spiritual realization which they did not reach in the earlier periods of their lives. And those who have been brought as children, quite young, and without adequate instruction, into the communion of the church ; those who have, by the exterior elements and appliances of the church, been held to an outward conformity with the Christian life, frequently come to a period in which their souls are put through a furnace of trial. Sometimes it seems as though they never before had been convinced of sin ; as though they had never before really had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And they wake up into a positiveness and clearness of faith. And there frequently is a richness of experience which leads them to say that they were deceived before. But they were not necessarily deceived. For this is the peculiar method by which men are brought to the full disclosures of a Christian life. And though it is the peculiar method, it is more universal, in this respect, than the regular and normal method.

Men frequently progress in religious life as travelers used to on old canals. They ran along upon a lower level, seeing only the valley through which they were passing, and thus came to some lock, in which they rose, step by step, and thus came to a higher level, with a larger outlook, a wider prospect. Along this level they ran for a time until they came to another lock ; and in that rose up to the summit level, where they could look over all the country round about, which they had never seen before. At first, though they were advancing, it was upon a low line of progress ; but at last they were brought up where they had more extended ranges of vision.

There are experiences which befall men, sometimes by grief and sometimes by moral strifes and struggles, through which they rise from a lower spiritual state to a very much higher, more appreciative and more intense spiritual condition.

2. Men frequently pass through crises in which they are at war with some special element in themselves. There are certain faculties, different in different men, that stand in the way of the development of the Christ-like life. In some it is temper, quick, violent, imperious, cruel, plunging them sometimes into great trouble, and sometimes into an anguish which stands right in the way of a consistent Christian life. There are many who make but very little headway in this conflict until, sometimes by one method, sometimes by another, and sometimes,

perhaps, as a sequence of the very temper itself, they are brought to a sense of their weakness in this respect, and to pain and suffering in consequence of the violations of that unclaimed and unsubdued passion. And they are not merely in "heaviness," but in bondage and in torment.

The hindering affliction may arise from loss of property, or loss of friends, or loss of respect. It may be some great and trying affliction that men are drawn into by passion. It may come in a hundred forms. But the root of it, and the work that goes on in connection with it, is one which makes sinful or evil a man's imperious and wicked disposition.

There is many and many a man who rages like the demoniac in Gada-
ra, who dwelt among the tombs, and who, when bound with cords and
chains, snapped the one and broke the other, and who day and night
cried out exceedingly, and cut himself with stones, till he met the
exorcising Christ; and then cried out with yet wilder exclamations,
until finally he was subdued, and the evil spirit was cast out of him,
and he was clothed, and was found sitting in his right mind at the feet
of Jesus.

All this process is often blind to those experiencing it. And to other men it seems a great evil. But in the midst of the darkness and swirl of these inward experiences, one of the greatest battles of the soul is being carried on, varying, fluctuating, now gaining ground, and now losing ground, so that at times there is great doubt as to its issue. Yet it is a memorable battle for life and for immortality. There is great "heaviness" and great anguish, for a time to the sufferers; but this is a trial of their "faith which is more precious than gold." And it is a trial which, if they understand that they are workers together with God, will be a crisis giving them a truer life and a nobler liberty. And though they seem to be broken, they are only broken as flax is broken, that it may become the linen thread, to be wrought into the white raiment of the saints.

3. So, too, for persons who sin by the tongue, there are crises in Christian experience which gather around about that member. For the tongue, though it is the instrument from which come words of prudence and kindness and benevolence, is also an organ that ministers to frivolity and vanity. It is the creature of lies; it is the perpetrator of slanders; it is the propagator of wicked stories; it gives currency to seductive imaginations, whisperings, backbitings, revelings, oaths, and bad influences of every kind. The evil tongue, we are told, is an organ which, like the wild beast, can scarcely be reclaimed or tamed. It is a member which, when it has its freedom, often gives itself to the ministration of lusts and passions. It is the chimney of the soul, and of the lower nature, and is full of soot and blackness.

Now, if men are addicted to the evil of the tongue; if there is a tendency in them to break out and give articulate form to all that is mischievous in their nature, then there must be some way or other of meeting this evil. They are not Christians; or, if they are, there must be a fight. Their victory may be little by little helped by age; it may be helped by one and another modifying influence and circumstance; but more frequently it will go on by a series of conflicts. And oftentimes there is a conflict which is the critical passage of one's whole life; and the temper is trained; and the disposition seems largely to be changed; and the whole of the man's nature seems to have been transformed.

How many men there are whose mouths were once fountains of bitterness, but which after having gone through seasons of great trial and affliction were fountains of sweet waters, and waters of life! How many men there are whose mouths were as the abyss of hell, or as the craters of volcanoes which belch forth lava, but whose tongues afterwards became ministers only of love, and things pure, and true, and gentle, and instructive, as the fruit of a great struggle, and of a great victory!

4. At the same time, and in the same way, every man who is in bondage to selfishness and avarice will, if he be a child of God, get out of that captivity. If he be a child of God, and he will suffer himself to be led gently by the progress, as it were, of the summer of the soul. The word of instruction, in his daily ministration of thought and feeling to himself, will be sufficient. If a man has this avarice, this greed, this selfishness, that shuts him up from his fellows, and leads him to use all the power that inheres in wealth and its relations for his own good, and he be a child of God, there must come a time when it shall be declared whether the Lord reigns, or Mammon. And it must be declared on this very ground, where the man finds it hardest. If it may be treated more mildly, and the work may be completed by the gradual and ordinary process of a divine grace, well and good; but either a man is not a child of God, or there must be afflictions, and there must be a fight on this ground, until every thought and feeling is subdued to Christ. There can be no part of our nature left without its appropriate battle.

How many times do I see this conflict going on in men! And how many know not what God is doing for them and in them! Sometimes God sends his ministrations to us angelically. As Peter was led out of prison by an angel, the doors opening before them, and letting them free into the street, so sometimes God delivers men from bondage by sending to them a messenger of gentleness, of mercy and of love. And as at other times apostles were brought forth in the market-place,

and were mobbed, and scourged, and reviled and threatened, so we are brought forth in our bondage, and are, by the various trials of life, and by the ministration of divine providence, taxed severely, and punished, it seems to us more than we deserve. Oh no; there must be some conflict, and that conflict will have its root, its centre, and its whole life in the purpose of deliverance from our bondage. And although men are frequently desolated as in a moment, and all their life's ambition is smitten, they are infinite gainers.

There is many a man who inordinately seeks prosperity for himself, and whose avarice and selfishness are irreclaimable until, in God's mercy, his prosperity is smitten, and his means are scattered, and he is as other men, and hope departs from him, and he says, at last, in himself, "I give up the idea of being what I always meant to be." Bitter is the struggle, bitter is the humiliation to his pride, bitter is the outcry which his feelings make within him; but after all, the crisis has come. God has humbled him, and he has said within himself, "I give up the ambition; I yield the purpose; I will be content, now, to live and fulfill my duty to my household, and do what good I can to my fellow men, and save my soul."

People say, "Oh! his spirit is broken." Yes, blessed be God, the *evil* spirit in him is broken. His ambition is broken. He is no longer the same fierce man that he was; he is no longer the same restless man; he is no longer the same scheming, calculating man; he is no longer a man that puts such inordinate stress on property and means in this world. He has yielded these. And it is the great victory of his life. It is a victory out of which comes peace and joy in this life, and in the life to come glory and honor and endless happiness.

In great "heaviness" may one well be, if God is trying his faith; if God is, by leading him through conflicts, developing in him a religious life such as is disclosed by the Lord Jesus Christ. And when he has gone through sufferings and trials and crushings, the victory which he has gained is worth more than all this life put together.

5. There is, first or last, also, in every child of God, a conflict of the affections. For our affections are not God-ward, usually. They spread themselves as vines that creep upon the ground. They have to be taught to climb. They are idolatrous. They almost make us worshipers of one thing. They need to be spiritualized. We need to lift up our hearts till they become fixed, not simply on the life that now is, but on the life that is to come. In other words, our affections, bright, sweet, pure, gracious, as they are, even in the natural state, are yet untrained and unchristianized. And though a man, when he is brought into a Christian life, purposes to live for Christ, yet each part of him must go through a discipline to enable him to do it. The dis-

cipline of the affections seems the strongest and the most wonderful; yet there is no discipline that is more essential or more merciful. It is not for the present joyous but grievous; it seems hard; and yet it is necessary and beneficent.

When birds have hatched their young, the nest is not large enough for them; and they must needs learn to fly. It seems hard for the old bird to shoulder them out, and let them, if they cannot catch upon some branch, fall to the ground; but it is a part of the parental instinct of kindness in the old bird to teach the young bird how to use its wings. The young bird is well fed and cared for, but it is not allowed to remain long in the nest. The nest is good as a place to be born in, but beyond that it is of very little worth. What kind of a bird would that be which never got out of its nest, and never tasted the upper air, and never sung in the forest-top, and never felt the liberty and power of swinging at its own will through the air?

The human heart, made to be larger than this life, needs to be taught how to regard the other life as the real one; and must be taught, in loving, to love in such a way that there shall be immortality and spirituality in its affection; in such a way that its loving shall be not for time, but for eternity. For we tend to love so that the affections do not reach beyond death; so that the grave seems like a pit of despair. Whereas, true love points upward. It gives us, as this world and the present life grow less and less, a larger and larger comprehension of spiritual being and eternity. So that when we have been living for ourselves and for our household, thanking God, to be sure, for our children, and trying to rear them, as best we may, for honor or immortality, and yet after all, loving them as idols, God descends in great mercy, though robed in darkness, and he smites down the pride of the household; he takes the beloved of the cradle; he desolates us. And then is the question between the heart and God; then is the crying; then is the anguish; then are the resistances; then is the darkness; then is the half-resignation; then is the pleading; till by-and-by there comes an hour in which the affections say, "Even so, Lord Jesus, reign over us." And through the crisis the heart comes out on the other side, not with less love, but chastened, regulated, spiritualized, subdued to Christ. And when one has come to this experience in his affections, the blessedness of it, the wealth of it here, the promise of it in the life that is to come, is worth every single pang, every single tear and every single groan that it has cost. It is good to be afflicted.

6. Then there are men of dominant pride and of concomitant vanity, who, at some time or other, have to go through a crisis. If the gradual influences and ameliorations of religion do not transform them, then there must come a time when they are to go into conflict. And

this may take place in a thousand ways. God is never at a loss for means. Men go through great and humbling mistakes, and even sins. David did. Solomon did. The prophets did. The apostles themselves were not unimpeachable men. They were frequently left to fall into mistakes. They had imperfections as well as other men ; and they had to go through a process of discipline before they were rid of those imperfections. God in his providence brings men into circumstances where they lose their reputation ; where they seem to themselves to be cast down from eminence, and to be outcasts ; where they are restrained ; where their sphere is circumscribed ; and where all that has been bright and cheerful to them, is dark and gloomy. Men oftentimes find that all the paths and courses which they have marked out for themselves are closed to them. One finds himself crippled in his ambition. He had marked out for himself the acquisition of means. He had intended to be prospered, it may be, through wealth; but his prospects for wealth are destroyed. Another man meant to be active and efficient in a certain sphere of life ; but his health is broken down, or the stroke of maiming and crippling has fallen upon him. Or, one may become blind. There are a thousand ways in which one may be subdued by the providence of God, so that whereas he was filled with strength, and ambition, and boundless purposes of self-aggrandizement, now, as a consequence of circumstances which have befallen him, he finds himself shut up to deprivation and suffering ; and the strongest part of his nature seems to be the very one on which the hand of the Lord is laid. And he goes through a great and fiery trial, and a trial sometimes terrific, according to the stubbornness of his disposition. And finally he ceases to resist the divine will.

There is many a man that at last yields his pride to the Lord ; yields himself to the providence of God ; follows the guidance of the divine hand. And out of this whole conflict comes the purification of his faith, which is more precious than the purification of gold itself.

7. God teaches us what all need but what so few gain by their own voluntary purpose—long-suffering patience, gentleness, meekness. How many, so long as they are surrounded by prosperity, live with an unsubdued nature, although they are in many things Christian ! For Christians are very much like farms. Usually, at first, settlers clear up and cultivate about ten acres of ground, just around the house. Of the whole hundred and sixty acres, only about ten or twenty acres are redeemed from the wilderness during the first year or two. After that it is customary to cut away five acres or so a year. And gradually the farm becomes subdued. But it is seldom that a farm is redeemed and cultivated alike in all its parts.

So God deals with us. Little by little, and through many degrees,

he clears up the various parts of our nature, and subdues them from the wilderness, and brings them into a cultivated state. But there are unsubdued parts of our nature. And they are to be taught patience, meekness, humility, disinterestedness, kindness and love. And many men that have gone through great trials, wondering what God meant, have, by-and-by, come to a disclosure of the divine intention in that quietness and joyfulness of spirit which is wrought out in them. Men do not at first recognize the benefit which is being conferred upon them by the discipline to which they are subjected in the divine providence. God generally measures his kindness to men, not by what they want, but by what they need; and therefore it is not appreciated by them. If he would give them houses, and lands, and ships, and bonds, and stocks, and money, and other things which they desire, they would say, "Oh! how good God is!" If he would feed their senses, they would feel that he was the most worshipful of Beings. But when he feeds their spirit, and sacrifices their senses thereby, and tries them, and disciplines them, chastening them with stripe upon stripe, taking away the foundation on which they stand, hedging them in on every side, bringing upon them sickness and poverty, casting them out, and making them exiles and strangers, they are apt to say, "It was not always so with me; I have seen better days," and to mourn over their hard lot. How little do men understand those things which have been done in them and upon them in the providence of God to break up the hardness of their nature, and make the soil of the soul mellow—especially where the body is brought under great suffering and affliction, that the spirit may have some chance of life.

These and such like examples are but specimens to show that while there is a general and gradual course of instruction and amelioration, it is a part of the divine plan, as revealed in God's providence, to make onsets on particular parts of men's nature. In view of this disclosure, I would, by way of application, remark, first, that while men are apt to look upon their trials in external relations, God is wont to look upon the inward fruit. We look in one way, and in the lower way of our senses, according to the fashion of this world. God looks with divine understanding from the standpoint of the heavenly land. God, who knows the reality of the internal and invisible; God, who knows what is the value of the soul itself, as separable from the body and its conditions—he loves that in man which is best; and for its sake he chastises him, saying,

"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"

It is not cruelty; it is kindness. It is not hardness; it is mercy.

I remark, secondly, that no man should fail, in every trouble which comes upon him, to recognize the errand to which God sent it. He sends trouble as a messenger to some, saying, "Humble your pride." If they will not heed the message, he sends other and worse troubles. If you disregard the gentler persuasions of God, you may expect that he will resort to severer measures to secure submission on your part to his will. He says to our absorbed and idolatrous hearts, "That love is too small and too earthy. It has not enough courage in it, nor enough faith in it, nor enough breadth and comprehension in it." If we will listen, we may love on; but if not, often, and often and often the idol is taken away.

Ah! how many men have found heaven by following their children there! How often it is that a man, wretchedly following after his companion, has found heaven by standing on the threshold of it and looking in upon the loved one that he has lost! The brute creation can be toled and allured by taking their young ones and carrying them on before them. And where a heart loves idolatrously, and is to be trained for heaven, and the object loved is taken to heaven, how often does it follow, crying as it goes, as a bird cries out while it follows the boy that has the nest in his hand! How often have men learned at the cradle, what they would not learn at the altar; and at the grave, what they would not in the sanctuary. Take care, when God sends trouble upon you, that you instantly say to yourself, "What means it? What does God seek to accomplish by it? How shall I fall in with this message of my Lord, and become a better man, in consequence of this trouble?"

I remark again, that no man ought to be discouraged because he is in trouble. No man ought to be depressed at the dealing of God with him. In the fourth chapter of the first Epistle of Peter, and the twelfth verse, it is said,

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

There are a great many who are discouraged when they begin a Christian life, because they find so much that is bad in them; so much of retrospect; so many times when they seem to be backsliding; so many times when a spiritual coldness overshadows them; so many times when their religious sensibility declines, and when they are brought into states of darkness and of trouble. They feel that they have been deceived, that they have mistaken their own evidences, and that they supposed themselves to be Christians when they were not. My dearly beloved brethren, *whom the Lord loves he*

chastens. If you are brought into trouble and grief, and there is a humbling of your pride and vanity, and a circumscription of your natural appetites; if you find that the world is not so bright to you as it was before; it is God's invitation to you to take the higher life. God is dealing with you, not in punishment, but in great mercy. Beware of suffering that does not bring forth "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." Do not say, "How long shall I suffer?" That is not the question. Do not say, "How much ought I to suffer?" That is nothing to you. All that concerns you, is, that suffering shall bring forth the appropriate fruit of spiritual purity, and so of spiritual peace.

When birds are flying over, and the fowler lies in wait for them, if they fly low, at every discharge of the fowler's gun, some fall, some are wounded, and some, swerving sideways, plunge into the thicket and hide themselves. But you will find that immediately after the first discharge of the gun, the flock rise and fly higher; and at the next discharge they rise again, and fly still higher. And not many times has the plunging shot thinned their number, before they take so high a level that it is in vain that the fowler aims at them, because they are above the reach of his shot.

When troubles come upon you, fly higher. And if they still strike you, fly still higher. And by and-by-you will rise so high in the spiritual life, and your affections will be set on things so entirely above, that these troubles shall not be able to touch you. So long as the shot strike you, so long hear the word of God saying to you, "Rise higher."

No man can determine for himself either what afflictions he needs, or what degrees of affliction are best for him. Leave that to the hand of the Lord. Say to him, "Thy will be done—not mine, but thine." Say to the Lord, "May the trial of my faith be to me, as it is to thee, more precious than gold." Lay your heart open, and say with the Psalmist of old, "Search me, try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me."

This is the life for that work. Not that we are to walk in darkness; not that we are to be overburdened here; not that there is in this world only gloom and discouragement. There is much for enjoyment, much for courage, much for instruction; but there are also the appropriate influences by which the rebellious parts of our nature are subdued; by which the things that are unfruitful are made to bear fruit. God deals with us as with children, when he chastises as much as when he caresses. The hand that bears the rod, and inflicts wounds upon us, and causes us suffering, is the hand that also cares for us and blesses us. If we are to be partakers of the divine inheritance, we must come to it by the way of the Saviour; by the

way of the cross ; by dying in the natural man, that we may live in the spiritual man.

Who, then, among us, desire to saved ? Who, that hear me, have been to Christ, saying,, "Lord, grant that we may sit on thy right hand and on thy left hand ?" Who of you have been aspiring and longing that God would clothe you royally with Christian experiences ? If when you prayed that God would do such and such things for you, you meant that some royal sermon should open some royal vision, and that then you might, in the effulgence of joy, rise up and pluck down all the stars of life, how sadly will you be disappointed ! Christ asks every one who desires eminence in the Christian life, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized withal ?"

Are you so alive to immortality and glory, are you so in earnest for the salvation of your better self, that you can say to the Lord, knowing that he punishes and that he afflicts, "Smite. Thy will be done. Let me lose, let me suffer, and let thy burden come never so heavily upon me ; only let these afflictions be for my purification, setting free all my hidden life, that I may be a man in Christ Jesus ?"

Blessed are they who know how to take pains and burdens and crosses, and who see in every single event of life the overruling hand of a Father, and who, in the midst of innumerable afflictions can still look up and say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Thou eternal God ! we desire to draw near to thee this morning, and ask thy help, that by thy Spirit our understandings may be cleansed, and our imaginations inspired ; that we may be lifted up above the passions of men ; and that we may not liken thee unto ourselves ; but that we may find thee in thy purity, in thy truth, in thy justice, and in thy holiness ; and that we may come into thy very temple. Though we cannot see thee as thou art, thou canst show us somewhat of thy glory, and manifest thyself to us as thou dost not unto the world. We pray that thou wilt have compassion, this morning, upon our weakness and ignorance, and that thou wilt lift us graciously up into thy presence. As we take our little children, and hold them in our arms, so we beseech of thee that thou wilt do unto our souls this morning, that we may come home and find that God is our Father who art in heaven. Far above earthly dreams, purer, more noble, more full of power and helpfulness therein, more glorious, may we rejoice that the God of all the spheres and all ages is our God and our Father.

We bless thee for the revelation of thyself, through Jesus Christ our Lord. We bless thee for that Spirit which was promised, and which has been sent to thy people to enlighten them ; and we pray that all the offices of God toward us in mercy and instruction may be fulfilled this day. Grant us a saving sense of thy presence, and the joy of thy salvation ; and may everything that is in us rise up to acclaim thee our God. We confess our unworthiness. We confess our manifold sins, continued through every year of our lives. We confess our proneness thereto. And we pray not only that we may have forgiveness of sins that are past, but that we may be cleansed so that in time to come we may sin no more. We beseech of thee that thou wilt help us to watch against temptation ; and may we in the hour of assault be strong, that we may overcome it. We pray that thou wilt deliver every one of us from doubt, from fear, and from uncertainty of mind. Draw near, this morning, to confirm their hope who trust in thee. Inspire those with confidence who are discouraged, and are looking back. We pray that thou wilt strengthen all who are feeble. Comfort all who are sorrowful. Enlighten all who are dim-eyed. Grant that there may be an abundance of thy spirit given to every needy soul this morning. Thou knowest the troubles and trials of each one, and thou hast succor for each one. And we pray that each one may seek for salvation, and learn the way of salvation. Even in the hour of darkness may every one know the way, and find victory in thee.

We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon those that are prospered, and that come hither this morning with the memory of thy goodness to them. And may their gratitude ascend as incense. And wilt thou accept the offerings which they make.

Grant, we pray thee, that all those who have trouble in their households may be remembered to-day. May the God of all grace comfort them.

We pray for those who are in trials and troubles in the midst of their affairs, that they may so carry themselves that their tribulations shall work patience, not only, but virtue and likeness to Christ. We pray for all who are in bereavement ; and for all who walk among the sick ; and for all who are themselves sick ; and for all who are burdened with any manner of trouble.

Thou, O God ! art the Saviour. Redeem every one of thy people out of all afflictions. And we pray that we may learn the sacred lesson by which sorrow shall change to joy, and by which loss shall become gain, and by which weakness shall wax strong and be victorious. And out of thy providence minister to our spiritual good, so that we may be equipped and prepared for that life which waits for us just beyond. Grant that we may not

put too high an estimate upon earthly things; that we may not over-value them. May we use the world as not abusing it. Strangers and pilgrims we are. We are as they who stop to take flowers and fruits by the wayside, and then rise speedily to travel on their appointed journey. And grant that at last we may have an exceeding abundant entrance ministered to us, when all thy work shall have been fulfilled, into the kingdom of thy glory.

Look with great compassion, this morning, upon thy servants of every name who worship thee. Grant prosperity to all thy Churches. May all thy ministering servants know how to divide the word rightly. May they see their work prospering in the Lord.

We thank thee for all those signs of unity and sympathy among the people which foretoken the latter day glory. We pray that thy people may be guarded as a flock, and that more and more their hearts may find each other, and that thy servants of every name may work together for the suppression of evil, and for the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Pity, we beseech of thee, the nations of the earth. See how many of them are despoiled. Behold the darkness that rests as night upon so many. And take sides for those that struggle for manhood and liberty, and for those that are seeking to dispel their superstition, and to throw off their ignorance. May a great light arise upon them. And wilt thou fulfill thy promises that respect this world. Overturn and overturn, till He whose right it is shall come and reign.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that you wilt teach us, and lead us according to thy love and thy wisdom. And as we overrule the desires of our children for their good; as we circumscribe their freedom; as we teach them by refusing them what they ought not to want, as well as by gratifying them in the things which it is proper for them to want, so do thou with us; and teach us, in all the manifold experiences of life, from day to day, to see the mystery of that which thou art doing. Grant that we may have intimations of the spirit-life and the spirit-land. May there be wafted to us something of the heavenly estate, so that we may see whereunto we are tending; that we may feel the growth in us of that which belongs to the other world; that our life may be hid with Christ in God; that when he who is our Life shall appear, we also may appear with him in glory.

Sanctify to thy servants all thy dealings with them. Draw near to those who have secret affliction which they can speak to none. May they speak it in thine heart. Wilt thou grant that their trials may result in a purification of their faith. Draw near to all who have household afflictions. Be a Counselor and Guide to them in their great trouble. Be near to those who are pressed hard by outward troubles. May they not be unwilling to submit themselves to the hand of the Lord. May they neither lose courage, nor faith, nor enterprise. May they still persevere in things that are right. May they understand why it is that thou hast hedged them up to better manhood. And if they are tempted to sin by sacrificing that which is right, by yielding up their consciences, and by going in the way of the wicked, may

they see their danger obviously before them, and flee for succor to thy higher wisdom and thy higher power.

Deliver all those who stand in youth and in the midst of life and strength, and all who are in old age, according to their several circumstances. As thou art dealing with them, so interpret thy providence and grace unto them, that they may find in thee their life, their joy and their strength; and that living or dying, they may be the Lord's.

And when we shall have passed through this scene of trouble, and shall have shed all the tears which have been appointed for us, and shall have washed our raiment white in blood, then may we appear with thy sons, clothed in white; then may every tear, wiped from our eyes and left behind, be forgotten; and then may joys innocuous spring up, forever blooming, and forever in fruit. And then, in the land of the redeemed, with all our ransomed power, we will give the praise of our salvation to the Father, the Son and the Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*

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